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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SECOND DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Letter dated 19 February 1991 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Centre for Human Rights

Geneva, 19 February 1991

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office at Geneva presents its compliments to the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and has the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the statement made by the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic on 8 February 1991 in exercise of its right of reply to the statement made by the representative of the World Union of Progressive Judaism.

The reply, made in Arabic (enclosed is an unofficial translation), did not in the least refer to Jews or Judaism and did not mention anything related to Judaic rituals. All remarks attributed to this reply are unfounded accusations and the campaign on which they are based is baseless and unjustified.

The head of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic had provided the Under-Secretary-General and Director of the Centre for Human Rights, Mr. J. Martenson, with an official copy in Arabic of the reply with an English translation. He emphasized that the Syrian Arab Republic respects Judaism as it respects other religions and reaffirmed that, in Syria, there is no discrimination or differentiation in treatment between citizens, regardless of

the religion, sect or creed they belong to; the Constitution guarantees all this. It should be noted that foreign officials such as members of the American Congress and envoys of other States, who have visited Syria and have met with a number of Syrian citizens of the Jewish faith, have confirmed and expressed in their conversations and reports that Syria is well known for its tolerance. They referred to the absence of any kind of discrimination against Jews in Syria. Most of them stressed that Syrian citizens of the Jewish faith enjoy good economic and living standards and that employment and economic activity opportunities are freely available to all of them; they have their own schools and synagogues. Also, State schools and universities are open to them on an equal footing with other citizens. Thus, the reply did not at all refer to Jews or Judaism, but rather to the discriminatory nature of the Zionist movement, which comprises an ideology based on expelling the Arab population from Palestine, replacing it with foreigners and establishing Israel, which embraces this doctrine and considers it its characteristic feature and principal foundation. Israel applies the law of return, under which a Jew who has never been to Palestine is allowed to return there, while Palestinian Arabs are expelled and prevented from returning to their homeland where they have lived continuously for many centuries together with their fathers and grandfathers. The Israeli Government does not conceal its belief in this ideology. We have recently witnessed that the Moledet Party, which calls for expelling the Arab population from the occupied territories and is led by retired General Rehavim Zeevi, has been rewarded with the appointment of Mr. Zeevi as Minister. It should be noted that in 1975, the United Nations General Assembly, in view of this practice and such discrimination, adopted resolution 3379 (XXX) in which it determined that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination. Repressive Israeli practices against Palestinians, which have been going on for several years in the West Bank and Gaza, confirm now more than ever the above-mentioned General Assembly resolution.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic expresses its strongest indignation at the distorted information that appeared in a number of newspapers and communications which took this distortion as their basis and attributed it to the Syrian reply, which did not include such remarks, as well as against the campaign that followed these articles, and requests that this note be circulated as an official document of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Mr. Chairman,

At this morning's meeting the representative of the so-called World Union for Progressive Judaism expressed certain ideas which aim at distorting the truth and diverting attention from what is going on in the occupied territories and the barbarous Nazi practices committed by the occupying Zionist authorities. It is clear that such attempts shall have the same fate as previous ones which fail to conceal the racist nature of the Zionist movement which emerged at the end of the last century in the context of racist and colonial policies practised by the then colonial countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The basis of that movement was to establish an entity based on pure discrimination supported by colonialists just as racist régimes were set up in Africa, particularly in South Africa and Rhodesia. History has clearly demonstrated this and we can see this clearly happening now in the occupied Palestinian territories, in the Syrian Arab Golan and in southern Lebanon as well. This has led the international community to recognize this fact through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 3379 (XXX) of 1975 which acknowledged that Zionism was a form of racism. This resolution reflects the opinion of the international community, not the other way round. Those who seek the elimination of this resolution are undoubtedly protectors and promoters of racism.

Mr. Chairman, regardless of the ability of the speaker and his organization to distort facts, he cannot change historical realities recorded in the legal investigation files of France and included in the factual historical book, "The Matsa of Sion". We should like to urge all members of the Commission to read this very important work that demonstrates unequivocally the historical reality of Zionist racism.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I should like to draw the Commission's attention to another fact. The victim referred to in the book is Father Abadri Tuma who was born in Colongia on the island of Sardinia. France accepted him as a Catholic missionary and sent him to Damascus in 1807 and when he was killed he had spent 33 years there. He was very well known in Damascus because he was practising medicine and visiting all members of the population, regardless of their religion, to vaccinate them against smallpox. It is worth mentioning that the investigation which followed his murder was under the supervision of the French Consul in Damascus, Le Conte De Rattimento, in collaboration with his assistant and the Governors of Damascus at that time, and those who read the book and learn about the reasons for Father Tuma's murder would clearly understand the reality of Zionist racism.

I do not wish to speak at any greater length, because time is valuable, but I did wish to draw the attention of the Commission that the role of certain NGOs at this Commission seems to be to hamper the work of this important Commission. It would be a good idea for the Commission, whose aim is to promote and protect human rights everywhere, to reconsider the criteria of participation of such organizations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.